

# Mecosta County Park Commission Commission Meeting

The December 16<sup>th</sup>, 2025, Commission Meeting of the Mecosta County Park Commission was called to order at the Mecosta County Services Building at 5:00 PM by the Commission Chairman, Mr. Stanek.

## 1. Roll Call

**Members Present:** Mr. Griffith, Mr. Hatkowski, Mr. Lambrix, Mr. Zimmerman, Mrs. Strong, Ms. Miller, Mr. Vogel, Mr. Stanek.

**Members Absent:** Mrs. Bradstrom

**Others Present:** Jeff Abel – Superintendent, Taylor Jutila – Operations Director, Jaydin Johnson – HR, Marketing & Events Manager, Angelina Braley – Administrative Clerk.

## 2. Approval of Agenda

The Agenda stood approved as presented.

## 3. Minutes of November 18th Park Commission Meeting

### Minutes of December 15th Rules and Regulations Committee Meeting

Mr. Hatkowski motioned, Mrs. Strong second, to approve the minutes of November 18<sup>th</sup> Park Commission Meeting, and December 15<sup>th</sup> Rules and Regulations Committee Meeting. Motion carried.

## 4. Public Hearing (5:05) – Park Commission Master Plan 2026-2030

Public Hearing was opened at 5:05 PM. The Commission Chair called for any public comments related to the 2026-2030 Master Plan. After a last call for comments was offered, the hearing was closed with no comments received.

## 5. Public Comment\* (comments regarding current agenda items)

None

## 6. Reports and Updates

### a. Superintendent's Updates

- **Davis Bridge Project** – Fishing Pier has been completed. Remaining work is the water access stairway/ramp, backfilling and prepping finished areas for concrete installation. Connecting the newly finished areas with concrete sidewalks, landscaping touch-ups, grill and sign installations, and a few punch list items.
- **School Section Trust Fund Project Agreement** – Was accepted by the County BOC with the grant agreement uploaded to the DNR website. We have received our first invoice for design work toward the project and have obtained a few initial layout options and proposals from playground companies.
- **Grand Rapids RV Show** – Is January 15th-18th. We will be rotating staff in our booth throughout the 4 days of the show. All updated brochures and promotional items are ready to go. We would support the idea of offering a Nightly Camper promotion at Merrill-Gorrel for the RV Show if the Park Commission thinks it would be a good incentive to promote transient guests to stay in the park.  
Motion made by Mr. Lambrix, Mrs. Strong second, to offer 2 free weeknights with the purchase of a 2-night weekend stay at Merrill-Gorrel Park. These nights must be booked with the same reservation on either side of the weekend dates and are not transferable to other reservations. Motion carried unanimously with a roll call vote.
- **Campground Legislative Updates** – There is a push to change some language in the current campground licensing legislation which would allow for campers to remain in parks for a longer duration than currently permitted. Currently the maximum stay in the Michigan statute is 180 days. Our current operating season is 163 days at Brower and 156 days at our other parks. I have been involved in communications with the mParks Public Policy advisors on behalf of MACPRO and county campground representatives to review additional potential revisions. MARVAC priorities include changes to the temporary occupancy maximum, changes to regulations related to structures, and pushing back against high groundwater discharge permit fees.

- **Buckhorn Dam Project** – We had an update meeting regarding this dam removal project in Paris. The necessary funding to complete the project has been obtained. A project update and schedule from the contractor were distributed to the Commission members. Anticipated mobilization date for work to begin is the week of May 4<sup>th</sup>, 2026.
- **COA Van Donations** – We were informed that the title has been cleared and we should be able to obtain the van next week for our use at Paris Park for river tubing operations.
- **Reservations Go-Live Dates for 2026** – Nightly Camping and Cabin reservations open on January 14th.

#### **b. Save The Ponds – Organization Update**

Mr. Hatkowski presented an update to commission members on committee progress highlighting the success at Community Giving Day where \$7,445 in donations were received. We are awaiting a permit from EGLE to get started on construction on the initial scope items. Mr. Hatkowski spoke on the Light Up Paris event and deemed it a success, especially given the first year and navigating the initial setup and design of the event.

### **7. Committee Actions**

#### **a. Masterplan**

##### **i. Master Plan 2026-2030**

Motion by Mr. Griffith, Mr. Vogel second to recommend approval of the Mecosta County Park Commission 2026-2030 Master Plan to the County Board of Commissioners. Motion carried unanimously.

##### **ii. Consumers Energy Ownership Updates**

Mr. Stanek spoke on the Consumers Energy meeting regarding the sale of their hydro dams. He stated that there was a good turnout for the meeting and it seemed to be in good order. Confluence Hydro will be the new owner of the 13 dams offered for sale from Consumers Energy. Confluence has stated they have no intention of resale at this time and will continue with current agreements for Brower Park and Davis Bridge. Confluence Hydro noted that real estate sales or development was not on their radar as part of the reason for purchasing the properties. Confluence Hydro intends to renew the operating licenses for each of the dams when they are due in 2034. Confluence Hydro will have a 30-year income agreement with Consumers for the purchasing of the electricity being produced at the facilities.

#### **b. Finance**

##### **i. Budget Adjustments – 3rd Revision**

The Superintendent presented additional budget adjustments for the year-end 2025 budget. Motion by Mr. Vogel, Mr. Johnson second to approve the third round of adjustments to the 2025 Budget. Motion carried with a roll call vote.

#### **c. Personnel**

##### **i. Operations Manager Position**

Jaydin updated the Commission that the Operations Manager position has been posted publicly, and that applications have started to come in. Staff will begin reviewing documents and scheduling interviews after the January 5<sup>th</sup> application deadline.

#### **d. Rules & Regulations**

##### **i. Seasonal Camper Incident Review**

Mr. Vogel presented a list of Rules and Regulations that were deemed as having been violated by a School Section seasonal camper at the end of the 2025 operating season. The determination being made, after a review of circumstances and statements occurred on December 15<sup>th</sup> during the Rules & Regulations committee meeting. The seasonal campers were present during the Commission meeting and were given the opportunity to speak regarding the incidents and allegations. The

Commission members discussed the circumstances, recommendations of the Rules and Regulations Committee and statements provided by those in attendance.  
Motion was made by Mr. Vogel, Mr. Lambrix second, to support the Rules and Regulations committee recommendation of a three-year suspension of the camper in violation.  
Correspondence with terms of eviction to be signed and distributed by the Board Chair and Superintendent. Motion carried with a unanimous roll call vote.

## **8. Financial**

### **a. Financial Report – Rev & Expenses, Year-to-Year, Cash Spreadsheet**

Financial Reports were presented and reviewed.

### **b. Approval of Bills**

Motion by Mr. Vogel, Mr. Johnson second to approve the bills as presented with a total amount of \$183,455.62.

## **9. Public Comment\* (general comments)**

None

## **10. Other Business:**

A. Next Meeting is January 20th at the County Services Building in Big Rapids.

## **11. Adjournment at 5:53 PM**